

VZCZCXYZ0041
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTH #0479 0911718
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 311718Z MAR 08 (CCY-TEXT-MSI8807-ADX77A105-45)
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1570
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ATHENS 000479

SIPDIS
C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: FM DISMISSES "REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (SKOPJE)" IN PARLIAMENT

REF: A) ATHENS 478
B) ATHENS 464

SUMMARY

¶11. (U) During debate in Parliament on the opposition's motion to censure the government (ref A), FM Bakoyannis stated publicly that the most recent Nimetz proposal "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)" was not acceptable; PM Karamanlis was less specific, but equally negative, terming Skopje "intransigent" and affirming a Greek veto of a NATO invitation absent an agreement. Greek commentators are almost uniform in asserting that a Greek "veto" is inevitable. Meanwhile, Greeks have responded negatively to widely publicized images from Skopje of billboards advertising an art exhibit displaying the Greek flag with a superimposed swastika; Ambassador Speckhard has issued a statement saying that the image is understandably offensive and that we welcome the Macedonian government's reaction.
End Summary.

Nimetz Proposal Dismissed in Parliament

¶12. (U) As the three-day Parliamentary debate on the opposition's motion to censure the government on social security reform (ref A) wrapped up, both Foreign Minister Bakoyannis and Prime Minister Karamanlis took the floor on March 28 to respond to criticism of the government's handling of the Macedonia Name issue. Bakoyannis said explicitly that Greece does not accept the latest Nimetz proposal:... there have been many Nimetz proposals on the table. There will be more because this Nimetz proposal has not been accepted by Greece." Bakoyannis and the MFA have continued to express that Greece will engage actively in the Nimetz process. PM Karamanlis was less explicit, but termed Skopje "intransigent," and affirmed that "without a mutually agreed solution, there can be no membership invitation (to join NATO)."

Commentators' Angst

¶13. (U) As the Bucharest Summit approaches, Greek commentators have -- almost uniformly -- determined that a Greek "veto" is increasingly inevitable. Commentary has focused on U.S. "pressure," mixing surprise and regret that Greece is once again likely to "lose" this game, with speculation today about the possibility of another three to six months of negotiations. Many commentators have expressed particular concern about possible engagement at

the senior-most levels at the Summit to resolve this issue, suggesting that the U.S. (and to a much lesser extent other Allies) do not appreciate the "decisiveness" of the Greek position.

Greek "Flags" in Macedonia

¶4. (U) Meanwhile, the Greek public mood further soured when Greek television began broadcasting images from Skopje of billboards showing altered Greek flags with a Nazi swastika in the place of the white cross; the billboards advertised a photography exhibit about a family of "Aegean Macedonians" who were expelled from Greece sixty years ago. Foreign Ministry Spokesman George Koumoutsakos' statement emphasized that "this incident . . . confirms, yet again, the correctness of Greece's position, namely, that a necessary condition for the establishment of relations of solidarity and relations amongst allies is, in practice, respect of good-neighboringly relations between countries and peoples." Yesterday's televised and today's written statements out of Skopje distancing the government from the offensive imagery will likely be picked up in Greece tonight. In consultation with Embassy Skopje, Ambassador Speckhard has also issued a statement saying that the image was understandably offensive to Greeks and others who suffered under Fascism and Nazism during World War II, and that we welcome the Macedonian government's reaction.

SPECKHARD